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THE

# THESPIAN MIRROR.

SATURDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 1, 1806.

## SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF THE LATE MR. HODGKINSON.

OF the life of this eminent performer we have been enabled to collect but few particulars. From our scanty materials, however, we now present a brief biographical sketch; and though we cannot vouch for its entire accuracy, we have inducements to believe that it is substantially correct..

JOHN HODGKINSON, was a native of *Manchester, (England,)* where he was born in the year 1767. His father, a respectable inn-keeper in that place, apprenticed him, in the earlier part of his life, to a reputable tradesman. Ill suited, however, to an employment so disconsonant with his natural impetuosity and love of fame, he soon eloped from his master, and had recourse to a profession for which nature seems originally to have destined him. He made his *debut* at *Bristol* in the character of *Watty Cockney.*

THE success of his first attempt, flattering his predominant passion, he continued at intervals to appear in different characters, at *Bristol, Bath, &c.* in all of which he acquitted himself with considerable *eclat.* During one of these excursions, he met with his old master, with whom his term of apprenticeship had not yet expired. This unexpected rencounter took place at an inn where young HODGKINSON had put up. The interview at first threw our youthful adventurer into considerable embarrassment, but before they separated he agreed to pay a consideration for his indentures, which his master accordingly relinquished, and

"*Richard* [*was*] *himself again.*"

WE then find Mr. HODGKINSON playing with great applause on the British provincial stages, where he had an extensive field to cultivate and mature his dramatic talents. It was about this period that he married Miss BRETT, who, as Mrs. HODGKINSON, has so frequently delighted us. In

1792, they were engaged by the late Mr. HENRY, (formerly a manager of the "*Old American Company,*" under the firm of HALLAM and HENRY) as principal actors in that company, and in the September of the same year, they arrived in America, and first appeared on the boards of the *New-York Theatre.*

After his arrival, Mr. HODGKINSON was alternately engaged at *New-York, Philadelphia* and *Baltimore,* where he performed with great profit and applause; and such was his success, that in May, 1794, on the dissolution of the connection between HALLAM and HENRY, he was enabled to become a part proprietor in the theatrical property of the *Old American Company,* which he purchased for 4000*l.* payable in annual instalments of 1000*l.* each.

Having made such additions to the company, and entered into such arrangements as appeared to him expedient for its support, Mr. HODGKINSON, in September, 1794, commenced his career in the new and arduous situation of manager and proprietor. His first season under this arrangement was at *Philadelphia*;* and on the 15th December ensuing, the company returned to *New-York,* where they remained until the summer of 1795, when the dreadful calamity which, at that time, afflicted this city, induced him to enter into engagements for the *Boston* stage, where he played with great applause. Shortly after, however, he returned to *New-York,* in which place he remained until the 31st of March, 1797, when an unfortunate Green-Room fracas involved him in a litigation with one of the principal actresses, which terminated in his departure. In this affair he was much censured by her friends, who attended a representation on the evening of the 29th of March, 1797, for the purpose of either restoring the rejected actress, or confounding our hero by their disapprobation. Accordingly, when he appeared, he was saluted with a general hiss, and the common cry was for the lady. HODGKINSON was not allowed to proceed with his part, and the play of course, stopped. On the succeeding evening, a still larger party attended, as he observes in his printed defence,† " with an apparent determination to prejudge and condemn" him. Finding again that the audience would not hear him, he came forward amid the tumult, with a declaration upon oath, that he "*would never tread those boards again!*"—He remained true to his promise: for, having spent some time during the interval as manager and principal actor in the *Boston Theatre,* although he returned (with some persuasion) in a few months to New-York, yet

* It is to be understood that this company took an annual circuit, which included New-York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, &c. &c.

† See "*A narrative of his connection with the Old American Company,* &c. by JOHN HODGKINSON," which he published in 1797, containing his defence on this affair.

he would not appear, until a *new floor was laid for the stage!* The result of this Thespian fracas were not so injurious to the professional fame of Mr. HODGKINSON, as his enemies had hoped, or his friends apprehended. Talent will bear away the palm, and difficulty and embarrassment, only serve to *knit its sinews.*

He became a joint proprietor with Mr. DUNLAP of the present Theatre, which, however, did not prosper under their management. Dissatisfactions arose which proceeded to open dissention, and ended in a dissolution of the partnership. He then left New-York and once more went to Boston; but, having a preference for this city, he was desirous of returning, and Mr. DUNLAP, the manager, engaged him and Mrs. HODGKINSON at the enormous salary of 120 dollars a week, that is 50 dollars each, for himself and wife, and the remainder was paid for the use of some theatrical property. Mrs. HODGKINSON's health and spirits soon afterwards became affected; a hectic succeeded and brought her to the grave in the summer of 1804. A few weeks previous to which she saw her sister, Miss BRETT, fall a victim to the disease, under the same roof. The melancholy fate of these two sisters, now that it neither serve the living nor reach the dead, shall be passed over in silence.

After the death of his wife and her sister, he left New-York and went to Charleston, where he became acting manager, which situation he retained until the spring last past, when he negotiated for the theatre in this city, and entered into an agreement to hold it for a term of five years from the present season. On his journey from Charleston to New-York, he performed in some of the principal places through which he passed, and during the prevalence of the fever in September last, visited New-York, in order to make some preparations for the commencement of the approaching theatrical campaign. It was here he is supposed to have imbibed the contagion of the yellow fever, for on leaving this city, he appeared to be distressed and discovered some other of the characteristic symptoms of that disease, which, on his way to Washington, became alarming, and terminated in his death. He was conveyed there and interred on the 12th day of September, 1805, in the 38th year of his age.

Thus, in the very maturity of hope, and the glow of just expectation, was our actor deprived of being. Never before had he been so sanguine in his views, or so provident and active in his arrangements; and had he lived to carry into effect the measures which he proposed, our stage would probably have vied with any on the continent.

Possessed of a person of more than ordinary height, and rather corpulent, but commanding and dignified; features capable of almost any modification; a voice forcible and sonorous, and above all, an unequalled proficiency in *stage effect*, and all those little, but essential artifices which attend it, he never failed to gain applause, even in characters which seemed to be

placed beyond the compass of his powers. Though in the first walk of the drama he was sometimes excellent, and never contemptible, yet his forte lay in the uncommon versatility of his talents. Tragedy, Comedy, Opera and Farce, were equally familiar to him; and with a remarkably quick study and a memory powerfully retentive, added to a readiness to undertake any character he was unquestionably the most extensivelyuseful member of a dramatic corps in this country, or perhaps in the world.

Mr. HODGKINSON has left two orphan daughters, who are placed under the care of Mr. TYLER, to be educated for the stage. Charity has not been idle in providing for their support. *Benefits* have been allowed them in most of our capital cities, and the receipts are such as will place these lovely children not merely beyond the reach of want, but in circumstances of the most pleasing and comfortable independence. These acts of disinterested benevolence will not go unrewarded. Their projectors will find the most delightful of recompences in the sweet reflection of having cherished and sheltered the dawning of beauty, and given to the world, perhaps a MERRY, or a SIDDONS.

☞ *The following communication is the production of one who appears himself to have felt the sentiments which he expresses. The characters delineated, are drawn by a masterly pencil, from real life. The essay cannot fail to interest the reader.*

## A FRAGMENT.

THE youth of ALBERTO was marked by the most happy auspices. Propitious heaven seeming to have destined him to an exemption from calamity, had centered in him the affections of a grandmother, whose indulgence suffered him not to know a want which it could prevent, nor a disappointment which it could obviate. This regard, which surely severity itself would blush to call a crime, threw around the object of her fondness, a sweet, but dangerous delusion. His speculations on the world, were a mere succession of beautiful fictions. A stranger to insulated effort, he never dreamt that he should one day be compelled to *stand alone*. Accustomed to the calm of domestic quiet, and misled by an injudicious indulgence, as to mankind, he never pictured to himself, the conflicts which continually agitate them. He viewed them as beings devotedly bent on the happiness of each other—as fostering spirits, who delight to cherish the dawnings of genius, and who welcome with smiles, her feeblest effort. He did not consider them *inquisitive*, *capricious*, and unjust; ready to convert every weakness into a crime—jealous of merit which they cannot rival, and of talents which they cannot suppress. The dawn of *manhood*

in ALBERTO was therefore the *infancy* of his judgment: and to the delusions of this early day, may be traced the calumniated suppression which clouded his riper years.

Nature had endowed him with parts by no means despicable; and the world at first allowed him to a *promising lad;* it went even further, but it was a world in whose pursuits he had not mingled, and whose jealousies he had not yet excited. It was a praise too, which that world thought it condescension to bestow. Possessing a warm and enthusiastic fancy, passions impetuous as the torrent, and a heart gentle as the dews, you see him about entering on a scene which had ever been the *elysium* of his fancy. Soon, however, was the veil to be withdrawn, and reality to frown on the fond fictions of ALBERTO. The death of her by whom he had been so long cherished, launched him at once on an unknown ocean, without a compass or a chart. He soon found requisitions from the world, austere and rigid. Judging only from the whims of malice, and at the same time tracing out to servility, a path from which deviation is death; he saw *public opinion* demand immolations of sincerity and of right, which convert life into a *grand masquerade*, where the excentric must owe to imposition their safety, and to fraud their fame. It appeared to him a tyrant, gloomy and severe; enforcing his dictates with a frown; from whose presence mirit shrinks abashed, and whom, to *pacify*, is to *deceive*. Oh! (would he often exclaim) Oh! for the visions that played around my infant pillow—the phantoms that mocked me with their peaceful whispers!

Unfitted to compromise with *appearances*, and possessed of feelings which, naturally powerful, had gathered fuel from the latitude of education, ALBERTO soon became indignant of semblances, which, in the abstract, reason cannot justify. Conscious of the *integrity*, he did not stop to enquire into the *speciousness* of his actions, but regarded society as if it were composed of none but intimates, who read the arcana of his bosom, and could appreciate the purity of its motives.

*(To be continued.)*

# The American Stage.

*Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis*.....Cicero.
The Imitation of Life...the Mirror of Manners..the Transcript of Truth.

## THEATRICAL REGISTER.

*"'Tis with our judgments, as our watches....none*
*"Go just alike,...but each believes his own."*

SHERIDAN's opera of the DUENNA possesses sterling merit:—it has survived the test of repetition for years, and is attractive, without extraor-

dinary aid from the actor. On Monday evening it received its customary *tribute* from a crowded, and fashionable house....and our ears were repeatedly exhilirated by the *applause* of the boxes ; the *encore* of the pit ; and the *thunders* of the gallery.

Anxiety was awake, as to the *debut* of the *noviciate* in Carlos. * he was encouragingly received. We hope that in the future management he will rather endeavor to cultivate its *sweetness*, than to extend its compass. The terrors incident to a first attempt, induce us to forbear any closer comments, on this first representation of Carlos.

Mr. JOHNSON gave much satisfaction in *Don Jerome:* but in the expression of *rage*, he

*" Outrav'd the ravings of the storm."*

perhaps less of *fury*, would be more of *nature*.

Mr. TYLER in *Ferdinand* was respectable, tho' not without blemishes. We would wish him in aiming at *rapidity*, to avoid if possible the extreme of *indistinctness*.

MARTIN, in *Signor Isaac* was truly excellent. We never saw him mingle so little of *himself*, with his manner of acting. He was (with one or two exceptions) a perfect *son* of *Levi*. We are sorry that so much cannot be said in praise of his *Sultan*, in the *farce*. Through the whole of the *afterpiece*, he was uniformly dull and most wretchedly imperfect —and frequently seemed

*" To dumb forgetfulness a prey."*

HOGG, had as much of the *Swine* about him, as we could wish in the fat *Friar;* and truly never was there a satire more just, or more severe, than that which the Convent scene furnishes on the pretended sanctity of the *holy fathers*.

We cannot help noticing the pale visaged *porter*. He called to our minds Shakspeare's Apothecary—

*" Despair is in thy looks, &c."*

If critics may be allowed to descend so low as to the *picking up* of a *crumb*, we must say that we never saw Mr. ROBINSON to such an advantage, as in the personation of the meagre, half starved attendant.

Mrs. YOUNG was unusually interesting. *Lousia* certainly did not suffer in the *person* of her representative—And although the voice and action of Mrs. Young may have been secondary to the beauty of her person; yet we cannot but be of opinion, that a little additonal distinctness of utter-

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* The Editor of the MIRROR was not a little amused on hearing it whispered throughout the boxes, on this occasion, that he was to personate *Don Carlos* in the *Duenna!* and his amusement was somewhat heightened on the entrance of the expected *noviciate*. *" A pretty strapping boy, however,"* exclaimed one—*" pretty tall of his age,"* said another. The Editor begs leave to inform those who still labour under this *unfortunate mistake*—that he *really was not*, the *Don Carlos of Monday Evening!!!*

ance, and freedom of gesture, will render her a still more able representative of the youthful and arch *Lousia*.

Mrs. SIMPSON in the *Duenna* was more audible and distinct than we have ever witnessed her.

Of Mrs. JONES' *Clara* too much cannot be said, in the way of encomium. This lady certainly possesses the strongest claims to public approbation and support. Her voice has melody sweetness and expression—her manner ease, sportiveness, and interest. In the song of "*Adieu thou dreary pile!*" she almost surpassed herself. Her trills were given with the utmost delicacy; and such was the delight which this song imparted, that applause could scarcely continue silent to its termination.

Miss DELLINGER's voice has some pleasing traits; but she is most lamentably deficient in expression of manner, force of emphasis and distinctness of articulation.

It would be unpardonable were we to pass over the *d'esprit* of Mrs. JOHNSON in *Roxalana*. She gave to the imperfect piece of the *Sultan*, more interest than we thought it capable of possessing. Tho' this lady's *forte* is the plaintive and the sad, we are happy to observe that she can be *light* and *playful*, without descending.

We shall close our remarks with one of a general nature. In modern *opera* the Song is announced by some studied phrase which drops from the lips of the performers, and which is well understood to be preparatory to the exercise of the lungs. The Orchestra then opens upon us, and the singer in dumb suspense, awaits the termination of the symphony. This interval is on every occasion a *mighty melancholy* one. From the sadness into which the visage of the performer settles, the moment that he has uttered the preparatory sentence, one would suppose it had been his *sentence of death*; and from the doleful manner in which he paces the stage, during the interval of the *symphony* one would imagine he was listening to his *requiem*. In an instant the Hoyden of sixteen, has become the heart broken widow of thirty; and the careless spark, assumes a visage and deportment, like that which immortalized the "*Knight of the rueful countenance*." "For this departure from the uniform personation of character, we can see no plausible excuse; and perhaps the *apparently dreaded* interval, which is to introduce us to "*Dorothy Dump*," or "*Amo Amas*" would be better filled up by an easy deportment on the part of the performer than by that long-visaged sadness, which would seem to predict nothing less, than the *torture* of *lungs and ears*.

Last evening, *Cheap Living*, Reynolds, and the farce of *My Grandmother*, were presented to a respectable audience. We have merely room to express our warmest approbation of this afterpiece, and hope to see it often repeated. It affords Mrs. Jones a new opening to her fascinating powers.

### THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE.

A play is in preparation for performance during the next week at our THEATRE, entitled the "WANDERER," and written by a young gentleman of this city, who possesses talents which every lover of the drama should be proud to encourage.

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A new tragedy entitled "FOSCARI, *the unfortunate Venitian,*" has been performed in the *Charleston Theatre.* It is written by a young gentleman of that city, and appears from its frequent repetition, to have been received with a considerable degree of applause. The part of *Foscari* was sustained by Mr. WILSON.

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FENNEL is playing in Philadelphia, being engaged for twelve nights. He opened with *Zanga*, and afterwards attempted *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Penruddock*, &c. A critique on his performance of *Hamlet* there says, "We have often seen the *part* played here, but never before saw *Hamlet.*"

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A society of gentlemen have recently associated at Petersburg, (Virg.) for the purpose of exhibiting plays. The "*Thespian Society,*" as it is denominated, devote the proceeds of their representations to the benefit of a seminrry of education, contemplated in that place. Their encouragement as yet has been great. They have represented "*Venice Preserv'd,*" &c. to overflowing houses. That so laudable an undertaking will be ulttmately successful, is scarcely to be doubted.

## Poetry.

*For the Thespian Mirror.*

### LINES WRITTEN AT THE FALLS OF THE PASSAIC.

TRACE we now the torrent tide
Tow'rd yon dark steep's craggy side,
At the dread verge one moment dwells its flight,
Then flashing headlong on the light;
The dizzy summit plunging past,
It heaves its thunders to the blast.
From rock to rock recoiling, still the stream,
Wakes in its downward course a foamy gleam;
Till hush'd at length, its billows all subside,
And gently steals the unmolested tide.
O'er spring-enamour'd plains pursues its way,
And vales made fertile by its fost'ring sway;
Reflects the beauties that its waters lave,
And heav'n's bright features dancing on its wave.
Such is the wearied spirit's last repose;
The sweet oblivion of a life of woes.
Each anguish flown; forgotten ev'ry care,
And life and rapture dawning on despair.

LODINUS.

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